

Glebe St. Presbyterian (now Mt. Zion A.M.E.) Church
7 Glebe Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-266

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

GLEBE ST. PRESBYTERIAN (NOW MT. ZION A.M.E.) CHURCH

Location: South Carolina, Charleston County, Charleston,
7 Glebe Street.

Present Owner: Mt. Zion A. M. E. Congregation

Present Occupant: Mt. Zion A. M. E. Congregation

Present Use: Church

Brief Statement of Significance: A mid-nineteenth century church building of interesting architectural character.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Originally the Glebe Street Presbyterian Church, it was owned by that congregation. (Mercury/Charleston newspaper/, April 18, 1848, p. 2.) Purchased by present congregation, 1882. (News and Courier /Charleston newspaper/, Oct. 13, 1952.)
2. Date of erection: 1847-1848. (Jacob F. Schirmer's Record (longhand) owned by South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, entries for May 30 and Nov. 30, 1847, and December summary, 1848.)
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown, but ascribed to Francis D. Lee (1826-1885) by News and Courier, August 29, 1885, in editorial on Lee's death. The date, 1847, which was before Lee studied architecture, makes this improbable.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Severely damaged by hurricane of 1893. (News and Courier, Sept. 1, 1893.)

Prepared by Beatrice St. J. Ravenel
August 1958

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A simple church building with well-studied classical exterior detail. The tower appears to follow English models.

2. Condition of Fabric: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Main block about 88' long (6 bays) by 70' wide, tower about 25' wide by 12' projection, rear addition about 30' deep. The church faces east and is one-story.
2. Foundations: The basement course of the wall is about 3 feet high and projects slightly.
3. Wall construction: Brick covered with stucco.
 - a. Tower: A tower projects from the center of the east front. The lower stage has simulated rustications, the courses being about 20" high. The entrance is recessed; it has a semi-circular arch with impost and archivolt. The doors are double--6 panel each--with a fanlight above. This stage is crowned by a three-part entablature which breaks around the entrance recess; its cornice ties into the impost of the arched openings of the facade.

The second stage of the tower has an ordonnance of paneled piers of considerable projection. They have simple bases and are crowned by individual entablatures, whose cornices carry through at the plane of the wall. Above each pier is a finial block with half-paterae on three faces. At the corners of the east wall these piers are coupled; in the center is a panel containing a semi-circular, arched window with plain impost and a plain inner order of the arch. At the corners of the north and south walls the piers are single, and project only slightly; there is a similar panel and arch in the center but the opening is blank.

The third stage of the tower is low, diminishing toward the top with a concave profile, and crowned by a small cornice. In the center of the east front is a semi-circular window.

In the opinion of this observer a spire of some kind must have been intended to complete the tower.

- b. Facade: On each side of the tower are symmetrical bays; each has a simple pilaster at the outer corner of the building, and a window with two orders of semi-circular arches, moulded impost and plain archivolt. There is a plain three-piece entablature; above it is a parapet which curves upward to become slightly higher at the junction with the tower. The parapet has a pedestal at each outer corner.
 - c. North and south side walls: The eastern bay is treated like the facade, with pilasters; on the south this bay contains a simple entrance into the auditorium. The remaining bays are plain, with arched windows, plain impost, and simple wood casings set into the masonry openings.
- 4. Windows: Typical windows have 12/12 double hung sash below and above a wooden spandrel, and a fan light in the arch, above a wide transom bar. The window in the second stage of the tower is double hung, the lower sash having 12 lights plus margin lights, and the upper sash being similar with the addition of the radiating lights in the arch.
 - 5. Roof: The main portion of the building has a gable roof, covered with slate. Additions at the west end have flat roofs.
 - 6. Chimney: A small modern chimney on the north wall, toward the rear, projects beyond the wall.
- C. Technical Description of Interior:
- 1. Floor plans: The auditorium has a gallery on three sides, a vestibule in the tower serving as access. At the rear is a large room which was added at an undetermined date, with accessory spaces at the sides. There is a modern entry at the southwest corner. The gallery is reached by two small enclosed stairs at the east corners.
 - 2. Flooring: The auditorium floor is covered by modern composition tile, but the rear room has single flooring of boards 1" thick, varying in width from 4" to 5½". Joists are 3" x 10" spaced 28" on centers.
 - 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plastered and painted; ceilings above the wide plaster cove have been covered with modern composition board. There is a wainscot of beaded boards laid horizontally.

4. Trim:

- a. Chancel: a small enclosure centered on the west end of the auditorium is formed by a wood railing with turned balusters and posts. Within this is a platform about three feet high, with paneled edges. Behind the platform is a large wood frontispiece consisting of coupled antae on either side of a window. The entablature is simple, with dentils in the cornice, which has only slight projection. Antae are paneled; their capitals have Greek profiles but their bases have Roman profiles.
 - b. Doorways: On each side of the frontispiece a doorway connects the auditorium with the rear room. Each has wood trim--an architrave around the opening with pulvinated frieze and cornice above.
 - c. Choir: In the southwest corner of the auditorium is a paneled choir enclosure with a raised floor. Above the west end is a pipe organ.
 - d. Pews: On either side of a central aisle are enclosed pews (all facing forward) with one-panel doors.
 - e. Gallery: The gallery extends only about two-thirds of the length of the auditorium, terminating in a quarter-circle. The eastern portion bows out in plan **beyond** the straight lintel and rests on two cast iron consoles. The whole gallery is supported by 14 slender cast iron Corinthianesque fluted columns which carry a wooden lintel. The entablature is of three parts, simple but with dentils; above it is a wood railing with turned balusters and turned posts surmounted by finials.
 - f. Vestibule: A marble tablet (among others) on the wall marks the date (1887) when the Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Congregation took possession of the building.
5. Miscellaneous: There is an old brick cistern below the western end of the building. There is a partial basement, probably modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The lot has a frontage of about 100' on the west side of a residential street, near the middle of the block between Wentworth and George Streets. The building is located near the north property line, leaving a small yard at the south.

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2. Enclosures: Brick walls enclose the north and south lot lines. At the street front a fence extends from the corners to the corners of the tower. It is of cast and wrought iron on a stucco base about three feet high, and has a small ornamental gate near each outer end.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee
Architect, N. P. S.
July, 1962

Addendum to:

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(Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church)
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